

News Release

For Release: Immediately

Contact: Mrs. Gabe Forsberg, Arizona Department of Veterans' Services
602-255-3373

Phoenix, AZ – The mission of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services is to advance the interests of Arizona veterans through advocacy, legislation, service, and community relationships. The department strives to keep the veteran community informed of issues of importance; and is notifying the media and veterans service organizations of key elements within the State of the State Address.

Governor Janet Napolitano is committed to serving Arizona veterans and the following excerpts are from her State of the State Address January 10, 2006.

"I cannot leave the subject of the safety of our citizens without thinking of – and thanking – our military veterans. We came through the federal base reduction process this year and protected all of our major installations. It took the hard work of our Military Affairs Commission, legislators, and community leaders to hold onto our bases and their missions. Now we have an obligation to protect the people who have protected all of us. There are 585,000 veterans in Arizona, with more coming home all the time. Nearly every one of them is entitled to federal benefits, but the process is not simple and it is not fast.

"The state provides Veterans Benefits Counselors – as well we should – to help vets navigate the federal maze of paper and regulation. We know for a fact that individuals who work with a Veterans Benefits Counselor will receive substantially more than those who do not. But here's the tragedy: for those 585,000 Arizona vets, we

have exactly 19 Veterans Benefits Counselors. That's statewide; that is wrong. In my budget, I propose that we triple the number of Veterans Benefits Counselors this year. Our vets have earned every benefit they are entitled to; we must give them every bit of help they need.

"I have proposed before and will include in my budget again, funding necessary to create a new veterans' cemetery in northern Arizona, and to build a veterans home in southern Arizona."

Patrick F. Chorpensing, Director of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, also serves Governor Napolitano as her Policy Advisory on Military Affairs. He said, *"The Governor is proposing changes that will profoundly affect the lives of Arizona veterans; enabling the department to secure entitlements for veterans, their dependents, and survivors."*

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